

Philadelphia NOW

Fall 2008



Special points of interest:

- National NOW endorses Obama
- Phila. NOW officer reports from DNC
- Another maternity center closes
- Phila. NOW officer receives Mother Jones Award
- Pregnant prisoners routinely shackled

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NOW PAC Endorsements – 2008 General Elections

National NOW PAC Endorsement
U.S. President: Barack Obama (D)

Philadelphia NOW PAC Endorsements

Pennsylvania State Senate :

Shirley Kitchen (D) 03

Larry Farnese (D) 01

Vincent Hughes (D) 07

Pennsylvania General Assembly:

Babette Josephs (D) 182

Curtis Thomas (D) 181

James R Roebuck, Jr. (D) 188

Vanessa Brown (D) 190

Cherelle Parker (D) 200

John Meyers (D) 201

Mark Cohen (D) 202

VOTE
NOV 4!

Statement of Kim Gandy Chair, National Organization for Women Political Action Committee (NOW PAC)

September 16, 2008

It is with great enthusiasm that I announce today, on behalf of the nation's oldest and largest women's rights organization, that **the National Organization for Women Political Action Committee**

(NOW PAC) proudly endorses Sen. Barack Obama for President of the United States.

It is no coincidence that I am joined in this announcement by so many allied organizations that collectively represent a

broad and diverse cross-section of U.S. women. From teachers to social workers, from business owners to college students, women in this country are lining up behind the candidate who is out there every day standing up -- clearly and con-

(Cont. on pg 2)

NOW-Phila. Chapter Fall 2008 Progress Report

Karen Bojar, President

Our chapter has focused on electoral politics these past few months, and we think made a contribution towards national NOW's decision to endorse Barack Obama. When Hillary Clinton withdrew from the presidential race, our chapter voted unanimously to approve the following resolution:

Given that Hillary Clinton is no longer in the presidential race and given that she has endorsed Barack Obama and urged her supporters to do likewise, and given that Barack Obama is a strong supporter of women's rights, including abortion rights, we urge national NOW-PAC to move quickly to endorse Barack Obama.

We advocated for this at the national

conference, and on Sept. 16 national NOWPAC voted to endorse Obama, and NOW is working hard to elect this strong supporter of women's rights. (See <http://www.now.org/press/09-08/09-16.html> & <http://www.nowpacs.org/2008/obama/issues.html>)

We have also worked hard to elect **Vanessa Brown for State Representative in the 190th** district. Philadelphia NOW treasurer, Louise Francis, held a fundraiser for Vanessa, and Philadelphia NOW PAC board member Lauren Townsend and her partner, Lou Freimiller, worked as consultants for Vanessa's campaign. A major focus of Philadelphia NOW's work is getting more young women like Vanessa into the political pipeline, thus increasing the

number of qualified women committed to feminist values at all levels of government.

You can learn more about Vanessa and make a contribution to her campaign at <http://www.vanessabrown2008.com>

Vanessa was one of our honorees at our annual Spring Celebration of Local Women Activists. Along with Vanessa, Philadelphia NOW honored long-time NOW member **Cathy Scott, President of AFSCME District Council 47**, the first woman and first NOW member to head a major union in our city, and **founding member Lillian Ciarrocchi**, who did so much to build the feminist movement and our local chapter in the 1970's.

Statement by Kim Gandy (cont. from pg 1)

sistently -- for women. Women of all ages, races and ethnicities are coming together in support of Sen. Obama and his pledge to fulfill this country's promise of equal opportunity for our daughters as well as all our sons. Although it is very unusual for us to endorse in a presidential election, this is an unprecedented candidate and an unprecedented time for our country. The NOW PAC reviewed Sen. Obama's record and public statements on issues that disproportionately affect the women of this nation, and I spoke with him at length about his commitment to women's equality. For example:

On pay equity. Sen. Obama is a co-sponsor of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and the Paycheck Fairness Act, legislation to end wage discrimination against women.

On reproductive rights.

Sen. Obama is a co-sponsor of the Prevention First Act, to strengthen access to contraception and reproductive health care, and prevent unwanted pregnancies. He strongly supports *Roe v. Wade* and will oppose any efforts to overturn it.

On violence against women. Sen. Obama supports the continued reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act -- of which Sen. Joe Biden is the chief sponsor -- as well as the Security and Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Act, which is legislation to provide legal, medical and financial support to victims of domestic violence.

On the Supreme Court. Sen. Obama opposed the nominations of George Bush's extreme right-wing nominees to the Supreme Court, who have consistently ruled against women's rights.

For more than a decade,

Barack Obama has said "yes" to women's rights, while John McCain has consistently said "no" - NO to pay equity, NO to contraceptive access and reproductive rights, NO to appointing Supreme Court judges who will uphold women's rights and civil rights, NO to funding shelters and other anti-violence programs, and NO to supporting working moms and dads with policies that support work/life balance. NOW supported Sen. Hillary Clinton in the primary, and now we join with her in saying "NO" -- No Way, No How, No McCain! And we proudly stand arm-in-arm with her in putting our hopes and our dreams, our hard work and our hard-earned money, behind the next President of the United States -- Barack Obama, and his running mate, long-time friend and ally of women, Sen. Joe Biden.

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A Delegate Speaks

By Cinday Bass

Attending this year's Democratic National Convention was a life-changing experience for me and, from what I've heard, for many of the other delegates also in attendance. Television -- even HD -- probably didn't quite capture the grace of Michelle Obama as she walked upon the stage the first night of the convention, the excitement on the floor of the Pepsi center, or that heartwarming moment when the girls told their daddy, Barack Obama, that they loved him. I'm sure that I wasn't the only one deeply touched by that moment. Whether Democrat or Republican, conservative or liberal, being able to witness first-hand the love shared amongst an American family is uplifting for us all, especially in these challenging economic times.

I must say that Michelle has been beaten up on, that's for sure. Whether it was her clothes or hair, something she said or something she failed to say, people, including the media, have given her a much less than gentle reception into the national spotlight. Despite all of the criticism and cynicism, Michelle delivered a critical message to the delegates -- and to millions of viewers -- which served to demystify the Obama family and to make clear that they are just like any other American family. They have strong family values, a strong work ethic, and a strong belief in duty.

Hillary Clinton also sent a clear message. She made it perfectly plain to her supporters and to all who listened and watched:

Barack Obama is her choice for president. Although I believe that a lot of the speculation on whether Clinton supporters would defect to McCain was largely media driven going into the convention, I, along with other party leaders recognized that some of that concern was legitimate. Hillary took that moment to let her supporters know in no uncertain terms that Democrats cannot afford disunity and that this election is far too important to be about one person's candidacy.

Although I did see some Hillary hold-outs in Denver, it was not nearly as divisive as portrayed by the media. By the end of her speech, it didn't matter who supported whom going in. We were all on the same page coming out, and *it felt like it*. Holding hands and talking with strangers, we were one and it felt good!!!

Hillary wasn't done yet, though. I don't believe the media caught this one. On Wednesday night as states called their rolls and votes were tallied, the momentum began to build. The anxiety, anticipation, and fervor filling the Pepsi Center made the moment surreal. It felt like we were all in another dimension marked by slower motion. And then, Hillary placed Barack Obama's name in nomination for the Presidency. When that happened, we were back in real time. Delegates exploded with thunderous applause, outbursts of joy, and sighs of relief. It was evident that we had been building up to this moment for months. I won't name names, but some of Philadelphia's highest profile lawyers, union leaders and politicians cried and hugged

one another. It was a scene you see but once in a lifetime. It was the relief you feel when you finally exhale after holding your breath longer than you know you should. It was a moment I will never ever forget, and even as I recall it, I feel it as I felt in that very night.

But one of the most poignant moments for me was after our presidential nominee delivered his outstanding speech where he presented his plan to restore our nation's image abroad and repair a failed economy that increases the divide between classes. Obama told us how he and Biden would work to fix a broken education system and provide health care for all Americans. And he told us how each of us -- each American through personal and individual commitment and responsibility -- could help rebuild this nation. After that speech, I saw Obama and Biden on stage with their families. To put all of this in the proper context, please understand that this was my fourth national convention. I've been a candidate, worked for numerous other candidates and elected officials, and thought I'd seen and heard it all. Yet, seeing this **vision of the American dream** - Obama, Biden and their families together on stage -- this melting pot -- was the most powerful political experience I've ever had (and probably ever will).

To all of you who afforded me this opportunity with your vote for me to be a delegate, I thank you.

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Kathy Black Receives Mother Jones Award

*“Mourn
for the
dead and
fight like
hell for
the
living!”*

-Mother
Jones

*“Injustice
anywhere
is a threat
to justice
every-
where.”*

-Dr. Martin
Luther King,
Jr.

At its annual awards dinner on September 26, the Pennsylvania Labor History Society presented its highest award to our Chapter's VP for Finance, Kathy Black.

Mother Jones was the iconic union rabble-rouser, famous for fighting for child labor laws and for organizing mine workers. She lived to be 100, keeping up the fight for working people until her dying day. When she was honored late in her life as a “great humanitarian,” she interrupted the presenter and said, *“I’m not a humanitarian! I’m a hell raiser!”* *“Mourn for the dead and fight like hell for the living,”* was another of her famous rallying cries.

Mother Jones had strong connec-

tions to Philadelphia. During the Theodore Roosevelt administration, she organized about 300 of Philadelphia's children, who worked in mills and factories, and went on a multi-day march to Roosevelt's Long Island home to protest child labor. He refused to see them, but the action was a major catalyst for the passage of legislation prohibiting the employment of children. An historic marker stands on the north side of City Hall commemorating the march.

A new marker was placed in conjunction with the PLHS event -- also outside City Hall. It marks a 1938 municipal workers' eight day strike called to protest low wages, layoffs and deplorable working conditions. This was the first ever

multi-racial workers' action in the City. The strike was successful and led to the establishment of AFSCME in Philadelphia.

Kathy was honored along with other local labor leaders: Linda Butler; Gary Kapanowski; and Henry Nicholas. The PLHS especially noted Kathy's longstanding leadership in the Coalition of Labor Union Women and with U.S. Labor Against the War. At the group's annual meeting the following day, Kathy spoke to the membership about USLAW's work, the staggering costs of the war, and the struggle of Iraqi working people to establish unions, gain fundamental labor rights, and prevent privatization of their oil and other industries.

SHACKLED!

By Dee Johnson

Childbirth should be sacred. But a woman prisoner is often scarred for life by the experience of being shackled while transported to the hospital, while in labor, during deliver, and as she holds her newborn for the very first time. It doesn't matter whether the woman has a history of violence or has ever attempted escape. Shackling pregnant prisoners is a policy that exists in most states throughout the country. Pennsylvania and 47 other states do not have legislation protecting pregnant women in prison from being shackled. Only Illinois and California forbid the practice.

Recently, the City of Philadelphia issued an Executive Order preventing the use of restraints on women who are in labor or delivery. This came at the urging of the Working Group to Enhance Services for Incarcerated Women, a consortium of nearly 30 organizations—including the Philadelphia Chapter of NOW—working to improve the conditions of women in prison.

The Philadelphia Chapter of NOW is also actively working to include Pennsylvania among the list of states banning the use of restraints on pregnant inmates. NOW members have already met with elected officials to discuss developing comprehensive legislation that will ultimately end such a barbaric practice. Let's keep hope alive!

(Dee Johnsons is Communications Manager for the Pennsylvania Prison Society, 245 N Broad St, Ste 300, Phila., PA 19107)

Maternity Care Crisis in Philadelphia

By Caryn Hunt

Chestnut Hill Hospital just announced its plan to close their maternity department on November 4th.

(<http://philadelphia.bizjournals.com/philadelphia/stories/2008/09/01/daily19.html>)

This makes 15 area maternity facilities to close in 10 years! In every case, high malpractice insurance, low reimbursement rates, and unprofitability of the maternity 'line' were the reasons given. This trend has created a crisis in maternity healthcare with no remedy in sight in Southeast Pennsylvania, where approximately 50,000 babies are born each year.

Maternity Care Coalition (MCC- momobile.org) has taken the lead with its Childbirth at a Crossroads report (http://www.momobile.org/pdf/MCC_Childbirth%20at%20a%20Crossroads.pdf), its work with local hospitals and other interested parties to try to form solutions, and it's local and state-level advocacy. The website lists hospitals that have closed their maternity departments (<http://www.momobile.org/ObstetricsAccess1.html>). The primary tact has been to advocate for more state funds to be made available to hospitals to make up for the shortfall, to educate about the issues, and to facilitate further community discussions. For instance, in the city's Northeast region, MCC is working to get a badly needed facility built.

MCC also supports passage of SB1137, the Senate version of the PA ABC healthcare bill. They also support HB2005, which reforms healthcare so that insurers cannot deny coverage for preexisting conditions and would be required to use 85% of monies charged on actual healthcare, rather than overhead.

Restructuring the way maternity care is delivered offers a more permanent solution to our local and national crisis, indicated by high maternal and infant mortality rates. (www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/80743.php & <http://www.cnn.com/2006/HEALTH/parenting/05/08/mothers.index/>)

Restructuring is an exciting option. It basically re-conceives maternity care as it used to be before being completely medicalized: birthing centers, midwives and home births. In Philadelphia the struggle is that such centers need to have a relationship to a nearby hospital and an OB, and these are the resources that are being cut off. Midwife delivery is much more prevalent in other countries and might be a better solution here than such a hospital-centric model for childbirth. It's probable a birthing center/midwife model of maternity care and delivery would cost much less than hospital care.

Unfortunately, the AMA doesn't recognize midwives and is pushing in many

states to define safe births as hospital births as opposed to home births (maternity care is a state by state issue). There is also a giant education/outreach curve as women often believe that because drugs are available - to speed up delivery, to make childbirth painless, etc- that more 'modern' means more desirable. The facts prove that something is really wrong with this approach. The number of caesarians performed in the US compared to other countries may have something to do with the lousy maternal mortality rate. This is obviously a very broad, long term way to look at the problem. Only more research will turn up the kind of enabling legislation necessary to move toward a different maternity care model in our state.

What you can do
If you live in the greater Philadelphia region, contact your state and city legislators and ask how they plan to tackle the maternity care crisis. Legislators need to be educated on the issue. Visit our website at www.momobile.org. Recognizing that a crisis exists will help mobilize state and federal resources. Meanwhile, politicians facing a general election in November should be asked about their plans to confront this crisis. Working to pass PA ABC & HB2005 statewide will get medical care, including maternity care, to more uninsured women.

HB2005. . . reforms healthcare so that insurers cannot deny coverage for pre-existing conditions and would be required to use 85% of monies charged on actual healthcare, rather than overhead.

Membership Application

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State/Zip Code: _____
Daytime Telephone No.: _____
Evening Telephone No.: _____
E-mail address: _____

Change of address? List your new info here, and send this form to the address listed below.

- \$35 Membership Dues OR
- \$15-\$34 Sliding Scale Dues (amount enclosed \$_____)
- Enclosed is a donation of \$_____ in support of Philadelphia NOW
- I am already a NOW member. Affiliate me with the Philadelphia Chapter (PA0450).
- I am already a NOW member. Add me to the chapter e-mail list.
- Yes! I am interested in volunteering! (Preferred activity, if any: _____

_____)

**Make checks payable and mail to:
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VOTE ON November 4!